

THE HOUSING PROBLEM.

"Sorry—afraid my room's a bit chilly—the kettle will take a while to boil on this fire. The College is simply *scrimping* us in coal. Why, A. and I have to pool our coal, and work together in my sitting-room to get a proper fire. How can one do decent work crowded up like that?"

"Yes—it's ghastly, and have you heard the latest? The Bursar has just stuck up a notice asking us not to take more than one bath a day, because of water and coal shortage. How can you keep decently fit, unless you get a bath after hockey as well as in the morning?"—*Conversation (actually overheard) at a tea-party in a College in Britain, Feb., 1921.*

But, after all, no country is without its Student Housing Problem to-day!

Hungary.

"Desperate plight, University students, numbering approximately 10,000, of which 7,000 are not residing at home. Of these 7,000, 4,000 are refugees, absolutely destitute. According information of Ministry of Education, many students absolutely without lodgings, sleeping parks."—*Cable from Budapest, February, 14th, 1921.*

"Out of twenty-one men's student hostels inspected, only six report the existence of a bath-room; in every case followed by a note—*Owing to lack of coal, not used.*"

"One group we visited were living in a factory, now used for living quarters. Families are in one part, blind ex-soldiers in another, and in one room are fifty students from the Polytechnic, which is 1½ hours' distant. The cots in two rows were crowded close together, with just room for a chair between each pair. Between two rows of beds were a few tables, with the usual drawings and designs of engineering students. There was no heat. At least a dozen men were studying in bed in an attempt to keep comfortable. One whole side of the room was windows. Most of them covered with burlap and old bedding, in an effort to keep out the cold. That very day the fellows had turned down a good supply of wood because, among the fifty of them, they couldn't collect the necessary 2,000 crowns (about 15 shillings).

"We also visited the Refugee University, with 1,400 students and professors, most of them from Kolozsvar in Transylvania. A large school has been put at their disposal, and here the classes are held and the men sleep, fifteen to fifty in a room. The former gymnasium is now used for sleeping quarters. Some are sleeping on the floor, and bed linen is practically unknown.

"The case of the two hundred refugee women students is even worse. We visited a building where twenty-nine of those girls were living in three rooms, two of them used as dormitories, the third as a study room. To get to this we had to pass through an alley, at one side of which was a pigpen. We found half a dozen girls at their studies, one of them a medical student, with a skull in her lap. They had a small fire by using in the study room stove the wood intended for all three rooms. The bedrooms were sparsely furnished. Not only was bed linen lacking, but blankets were scarce. Some girls sleep together in single beds to keep warmer. A couple of wash bowls provided the only bathing facilities. One girl had woven a bit of wire screening to fit over a gas jet so that they could get an occasional drop of hot water."—*Letter from a recent visitor.*

Poland.

" 1,200 recently demobilised students in Warsaw are houseless. They are sleeping in railway stations and streets."—*Cable, Dec. 13, 1920.*

" The Relief Scheme has, after immense difficulty (even when helped by the officials), secured an empty barracks to accommodate 500 of these students, and has equipped it with the minimum of furniture required."—*Report, Feb., 1921.*

" Even before demobilisation began, the available hostels accommodated only one-thirtieth to one-fiftieth of the students. These hostels were, without exception, occupied by Austrian or Russian soldiers during the war, and all bedding, kitchen utensils, fittings and furniture removed or destroyed.

" A typical Men's Hostel in Warsaw contains 63 rooms, and 250 students; there are only 183 bedsteads, 133 bed-covers, 122 pillow-cases, 124 sheets, 10 towels, and a few kitchen utensils; no washing utensils, no book-shelves."—*Reports of Investigators.*

Austria.

Rent of ordinary room per month—1914, Kr. 60; 1920, Kr. 500.

Heating in winter is impossible for the student. Light he must provide himself. Many students are sleeping in lodging-houses, railway stations, bath-rooms, lavatories, etc. Large numbers of students who live with their families are sharing one room and a kitchen with six or eight other people, men, women and children. Small chance of good work there!

Czechoslovakia

" Students find it impossible to find places to live. This fall, some were sleeping in city sewers in Prague. Others sleep in halls, kitchens, bath-rooms; in coffee-houses, when lights are out, they use billiard tables and benches for beds, and others sleep in waiting-rooms of Prague stations, in telephone boxes, or in the open air in parks. The greater number live in groups in places sometimes provided for them by Government, sometimes otherwise—an old prison, an old Catholic Convent, and so forth. No heat, no light for study, no baths."—*Letters from Prague, Autumn, 1920.*

" I visited over one hundred Prisoners of War Camps during the War, and in none of them did I see housing conditions worse than in some of the Student Hostels I have seen lately in Central Europe."—*Opinion of an Expert on Prisoners of War Conditions.*

What Can Be Done.

With Money we can :—

1. Provide *Hostels or Barracks*, by promoting Student Building Schemes, or Student Co-operative Hostel plans.
2. Provide the minimum of decent *Equipment* for existing Hostels or Barracks, blankets, towels, beds, tables, chairs, etc.
3. Provide *Fuel and Light* for Hostels and common study-rooms. Thus, gifts of coal and wood, promoting student wood-cutting schemes, etc.

Without Money we can do **Nothing**.

Only gifts of *money* will enable us to meet this appalling need.

All gifts from National Committees for this purpose should be sent to our Treasurer—

MR. LEWIS HESS,

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Geneve,

Switzerland.

March, 1921.